Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF 4 August – September 1998

Taizé
YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING
Milan
28 December '98 - 1 January '98/99

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St Ambrose Church, in the centre of the city

28 DECEMBER 1998 – 1 JANUARY 1999
THE YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN MILAN

Together in the Capital of Lombardy

In May and June, to begin preparations for the European meeting, some Taizé brothers went to Milan for the first information meetings. Twelve meeting-places in and around the city had been chosen by those in charge of young adult ministry for the diocese.

These meetings were a way of integrating the European meeting into the life of the local Church. In addition to their usefulness for giving information about the programme for the meeting and the stages of the preparation, they were beautiful times of prayer and an occasion for young people from different parishes to make each other's acquaintance.

In all these information meetings, one could sense a great sense of expectation and a desire to use the opportunity to broaden the life of the parish: to start or continue a regular prayer, to get to know families, to discover "signs of hope," in other words thousands of people who are committed to working with the poor, with the ill, with prisoners, and who will share their experiences in the mornings during the European meeting.

BEGINNING THE PREPARATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEETING

"I was very happy about the prayer in Rho," said Cristina. "The young people in that town of 60,000 inhabitants have organized a monthly prayer using the songs of Taizé, as is true in many other towns in the region. That evening the main church was almost completely full, with 250 people from different parishes. The prayer was beautiful. It was almost too short, because we had to leave time for the information that people were waiting for.

"We are well aware that it won't be easy to convince families that they can offer hospitality even if they don't have an extra bed or a guest room. We will visit the families to invite them to the European meeting and explain what is expected of them. In our diocese, the blessing of homes takes place before Christmas. Perhaps we can go along with the priests and in that way meet the families that we did not contact directly in church. Small groups are already being formed to organize the preparation.

"After the information meeting, at about 11:30pm, we went to pray in the garden of the parish in a place which

has just been set up for prayer and silence. It used to be an old barn with a tower. On the first floor there is now a space for the celebration of the Word, large enough to accommodate about 100 persons. On each floor of the tower there is a smaller room for silence, either in front of the cross or before the reserved Eucharist. This place will be precious because it is easily accessible, even at night."

These early meetings in different sectors as far as thirty kilometres from Milan have already made it possible to contact some 150 parishes. It is estimated that over 400 parishes will welcome participants at the end of the year. Preliminary contacts have also been made with the leaders of different denominations.

A DYNAMIC YOUTH MINISTRY

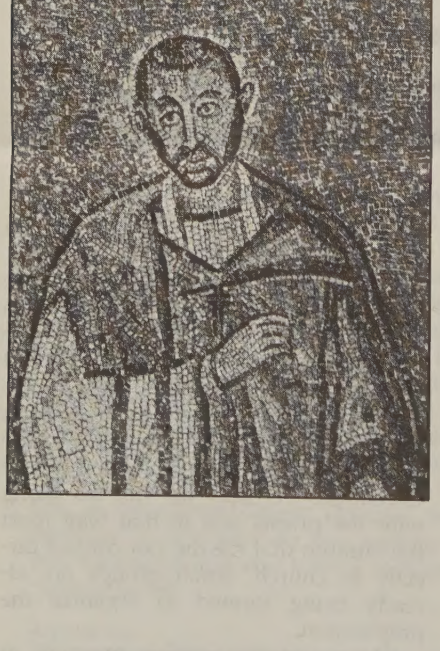
Someone who comes to Milan from elsewhere is astonished to see how many different activities there are for young people in the parishes. One of the institutions you find everywhere are the "oratories"; that is what the youth centres are called. Near every parish church there is a sports field--in the city centre, at least a courtyard with basketball nets and soccer goalposts; in the outlying areas, a full-sized field. This emphasis on sports should not hide the fact that the "oratories" are first and foremost places for Christian education and catechism. The social role of the more than 1300 "oratories" spread throughout the diocese is immense. When they are not being used by children for catechism classes, families with their children are present for celebrations, or elderly persons for gatherings. Not only are all the different generations together, but also young people from different backgrounds who live in the neighbourhood make use of the place for what is called in Italian *l'aggregazione sociale*, conviviality. As soon as school ends, educational or cultural activities as well as sports are offered to all the children. More than 400,000 children are taken care of in this way by volunteers.

In a city where the population is growing older (Italy has the lowest birth rate in Europe), the parishes are places where children are very present! Ministry to the young is very structured. Following the activities for children there are groups for older then for younger teenagers, for youth from 18 to 20 and for young adults over 20. There are questions that keep coming up: how can we adapt to the lack of young priests available to work with these groups? How can we learn to work together better, to share activities among neighbouring parishes? How can we respond to the new form of poverty which affects the young especially, a poverty of upbringing suffered by those abandoned by their parents? How can we not reject anybody and respond to the very different needs and expectations of so many young people who are overwhelmed by so many possibilities and have trouble settling down?

These questions are only some those which the people in charge ministry to the young are reflecting o The Milanese are noted for their orga izing ability. They demonstrate it whe in addition to running so many differe groups, they bring together for an ev ning in the stadium of San Siro mo than 30,000 candidates for confirmatio or 2000 leaders of Catholic Action for weekend at Sesto San Giovanni. The also know that their concern to organiz youth ministry well is not the only im portant thing.

The archbishop of Milan wrote h first pastoral letter to the diocese on th topic of silence and listening. Amon the themes offered for reflection durin the coming year, a central place ha been given to the theme of pilgrimag inviting each person to dare to set ou on the road, bringing with them onl what is essential for faith and Christia life.

Quite naturally, the European mee ing will enter into an intimate collabora tion with the dynamic youth ministry the diocese of Milan. Beginning in mid September the meetings will begi again, first by sector, then in each of th parishes. Preparation groups will mee regularly to pray and to reflect togethe with Taizé brothers or young peopl who will come from Taizé to help dur ing this time. At the heart of the pre paration, a daily midday prayer will b held in the Church of Saint Ambrose where the fourth century archbishop Milan, who so deeply marked the city, i venerated.



Milan: The City of Saint Ambrose

One day Saint Ambrose, who was archbishop of Milan at the end of the fourth century and who is still today venerated in that city, wrote a commentary on the Biblical story of the prodigal son. Here is part of that commentary.

"We are sons, let us run towards the Father (see Luke 15,11-32). (...) And do not be afraid that he will not welcome us, for 'God does not take pleasure in the loss of the living' (Wisdom 1,13). See, he is coming to meet you; he will fall upon your neck, for 'the Lord raises up those who are brokenhearted' (Psalm 146,8). He will give you a kiss, which is a token of tenderness and love; he will give you a robe, a ring, shoes. You are still fearful that he will find fault with you; he restores your dignity. You are afraid of punishment; he gives you a kiss. You fear reproaches; he prepares banquet. (...) Returning to the Lor means coming to oneself again. (...) Le us learn with what words we should ap proach the Father: 'Father,' said th prodigal son. What mercy, what tender ness on the part of the one who, ever when offended, does not refuse to b called by the name of father! 'Father, said the prodigal son, 'I have sinned against heaven and against you.' (... Don't be afraid you will not obtain wha you have requested: the advocate guar antees forgiveness; the creator promises grace; the defender assures reconcilia tion with paternal tenderness.* Believe for he is truth; rest, for he is strength."

*In other words, the whole Trinity who offer us life in fullness: Christ is the advocate wh enables us to persevere; the Father is th Creator of all things; the Holy Spirit is ou defender.

Taizé
YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING
Milan
December '98/99
- 1 January

Young Adult European Meeting in Milan

28 December 1998 – 1 January 1999

At the end of this year, tens of thousands of young adults from throughout Europe will be welcomed in the city of Milan, Italy. A new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth," it will be the 21st European meeting prepared by Taizé.

The announcement that the next European meeting will take place in the capital of Lombardy was made simtaneously by Cardinal Martini, the chbishop of Milan, and Brother Roger n Saturday 4 April.

Taking part in the European meeting eans preparing oneself to work for reonciliation on all levels, in the human mily as well as with those around us in ur daily lives.

Being welcomed in families and parhes helps us to discover, in a tangible ay, that peace and trust are possible mong people of different backgrounds.

Prayer with others and times of group naring root our search for meaning in a ommunion with God.

Meeting witnesses to a commitment on ehalf of others, in neighbourhoods and arishes, helps us to take on responsiilities when we return home.

PREPARATION:

For the European meeting to go well, ach participant must take part in all that s proposed. An attitude of attention and penness to those from other countries s vital.

The time of preparation should proide a foretaste of the meeting itself, so hat those who register know what they re committing themselves to, so that hey can consciously decide to take part n all the prayers and meetings. The preparation takes place on a regional asis through meetings and prayers which will be organized from September on.

The following questions can help this preparation:

What motivates me to set out towards other Christians who are far away? Am I ready to take a similar step towards those who are nearby?

Who can I set out with? Who do I know around me who would be happy to take part in this experience of prayer, sharing and openness to others? How can I propose it to other people beyond my circle of friends and acquaintances?

Can I take a time of silence now and then to review my life, to pray simply while listening to God?

The pilgrimage to Milan calls for an inner attitude of openness, of attentiveness to others. How can I begin by opening myself to those who need me here and now?

The starting-point of the pilgrimage is the local community. How can I look for ways, from the very beginning of the preparation, of maintaining and deepening links with different groups and local Christian communities?

PRACTICAL DETAILS

Arrival: Monday morning, 28th December 1998 between 7am and 12 noon. **Departure:** Friday mid-afternoon, 1st January 1999.

General programme: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city and surrounding region. Morning prayer each day will be in one of the churches of the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day – midday and evening – there will be two common prayers for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes.

Accommodation: Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Accommodation will be with families and in parish buildings.

17 to 29 year olds:
– those who can help, as animators in parishes or as team-leaders for practical tasks, or in the choir group, need to arrive on Saturday 26th December, between 8am and 3pm. (Arrival not possible on 27th December.)
– those who arrive on 28th December choose one of two ways of taking part:
+ participation in the life of parishes of the city (this is the main group);
+ helping in a team that has a practical responsibility (meal distribution, church team, choir group), while still participating in the life of a parish.

16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by an adult over 18, with each adult accompanying no more than four 16 year olds. Arrival: 28th December, not before. All take part in the main group during the meeting: "participation in the life of parishes of the city".

Adults over 30: the European Meeting is intended for young adults under 30, however a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading groups of young adults. We ask older adults (over 45) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, and arrive on 28th December (not before). Those who cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and who need a "real bed" please indicate this on the registration form.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé – best by telephone in October or November – to arrange this.

The contribution to costs expected from each participant can only be given exactly in the Autumn. For young people from Britain, it will be in the region of £40 for the whole meeting. As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass.

Send in your registration form by 1st December at the latest. Further information will be sent in November to those who register earlier. Send the form to Taizé either directly or through the person leading your group.

Travel: - from Britain: for special coaches to the meeting contact "Skyliners", Flaval House, Caldwell Road, NUNEATON, CV11 4NB. Tel.: (01203) 325682 / 328410; Freephone: (0500) 481111; Fax: (01203) 354626
– from other countries: write to Taizé for information.

"European Meeting", Taizé Community
71250 TAIZÉ, France.
tel: (+33) 385 50 30 02; fax: (+33) 385 50 30 16
email: meetings@taize.fr
web: http://www.taize.fr

How can we know God?

Before being a certainty for us, God is a question. Who has not wondered at one time or another about the meaning of life? "Why does the universe exist? Why am I here on earth? Is there a logic behind the course of human history and that of my own life?"

The religious traditions of humanity affirm that these questions have an answer that does not depend on us alone. The Bible speaks to us of a good God, the creator of all that exists, who is very close to human beings. As Saint Paul explained to the philosophers of Athens, "He is not far from any of us, for in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17,27-28).

The starting-point for coming to know God is thus the conviction that God does not play hide-and-seek with us but wants to be known. That is what Jesus tried to explain to his hearers when he said, "Seek and you will find... Whoever seeks finds" (Luke 11,9-10). He was speaking about seeking God in prayer. Seeking God means first of all opening up the depths of our heart to him in a dialogue made up of trust and simplicity.

All who enter in this way into a relationship with the Mystery at the heart of life are immediately led to take part in an adventure that is not always easy. In order better to know the true God, they must be let themselves be divested of their own ways of seeing. For if God is close to us, it is also true that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways" (cf. Isa 55,8-9). For Christians, God is light without any darkness at all, and so in order to know God we must "walk in the light" (1 John 1,5-7) by living according to his will of love, in a word by a life of attention to others.

In our search for God we are not left entirely to our own devices. The great religious traditions--and this is true notably of the Bible—allow us to benefit from the experience of a great many women and men across the ages. In chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews, the author shows us "the great cloud of witnesses" on which our faith can rest. He does not, for all that, keep silent about his conviction that after speaking "at many times and in many ways," God has now spoken his final word to us in Jesus Christ (Heb 1,1-2). In Christ, God takes on a human form and walks alongside us.

Why did Jesus say "I am the Way"?

How many times has not this verse of Saint John's Gospe (John 14,6) been used by believers to denigrate the value o the importance of other spiritual experiences! On the lips o Jesus, however, these words do not attempt to exclude any one from a communion with God. As he is about to leav his disciples, Jesus sees that Thomas is worried because h does not know where his Teacher is going and how to fol low him. He wants to allay his fears, so he tells him that h is going to the Father to prepare him a place, and that h himself is the way to the Father. His main intention is no to *limit* access to God by imposing demanding obligations but rather to *facilitate* this access. The disciples will not have to wear themselves out by esoteric practices or heroic efforts to enter into communion with the Source. In Jesus, the only Son of the Father, here and now they are able to know and to live with God: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14,9).

Elsewhere in the Gospel, it is true, Jesus makes use of forceful language in the style of the prophets of old: "If you do not believe that I Am, you will die in your sins!" (John 8,24). This is an attempt to shake up the religious elites of his time, who are well placed to recognize him and yet who shut their eyes to the light out of fear or arrogance. He wants them to become aware of what is at stake in their behaviour: do they realize that they are missing the road that leads to true Life? For each man and woman, the search for God involves an element of inner struggle. We are set before a choice that has to be made over and over again; we are asked to choose the light, to choose Life that is one with love.

The prologue of the fourth gospel (John 1,1-14) recognizes that some make this choice outside of an explicit knowledge of Christ. "The Word was the true light, that enlightens every human being..." (John 1,9). In this respect, the early Christians spoke of "seeds of the Word" scattered throughout time and space. If, "when the fullness of time came" (Gal 4,4), the Word finally became flesh in Christ Jesus, this was to remove all ambiguity and to make it possible for all humanity to enter into communion with God in one body. The Word made flesh does not eradicate the "seeds" that came before him but rather gives them maximum consistency. In other words, God calls every human being by a way known to God alone, but that way *is* Christ, and so all who remain faithful to the divine call in the depths of their heart will one day recognize that, perhaps without their realizing it, Christ was in fact leading them on. "It is not by saying to me 'Lord, Lord' that you will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but by doing the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt 7,21).

Two Questions About Knowledge of God

EDITATING ON THE WORD
EPTEMBER

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Lk 23:33-34

Tue On the cross, Jesus
d: Father, forgive them; they do
know what they are doing.

Col 3:12-17

Wed May the peace of
rist reign in your hearts, be-
se it is for this that you were
ed together in one Body.

1 Jn 1:5-7

Thu If we walk in the light,
God is in the light, we are in
mmunion with one another.

Mt 18:21-22

Fri Peter asked Jesus,
w many times should I forgive
brother if he wrongs me? Up to
ven times?" Jesus answered,
t seven times, but seventy-
ven times."

Is 49:1-6

Sat The Lord says: It is not
ugh for you to be my servant. I
ll make you a light to the nation-
o that my salvation may reach
furthest corners of the earth.

Lk 14:27-33

SUN Jesus said: Whoever
es not carry their cross and fol-
v me cannot be my disciple.

Rm 8:31-39

Mon St. Paul writes: I am
rtain of this: neither death nor
, neither angels nor demons,
ither the present nor the future,
r any powers, neither height nor
pth, nor anything else in all cre-
on will be able to separate us
m the love of God which is in
rist Jesus.

Mt 1:18-23

Tue The virgin will con-
ive and give birth to a son, and
ey will call him Emmanuel, a
me which means "God-with-us".

Jn 16:20-22

Wed Before his passion,
sus said to his disciples: Now
u are sad, but I shall see you
gain and you hearts will be full of
y. And that joy no one shall take
m you.

Rv 2:8-11

Thu The Lord says: I know
ur trials and your poverty, yet
u are rich: do not fear suffering,
ay faithful until death and I will
ve you the crown of life.

Mk 11:22-25

Fri Jesus said: When you
ay, if you hold anything against
nyone, forgive them, as your
ather in heaven forgives your
ns.

2 P 1:5-8

12 Sat Seek perseverance, true devotion, mutual kindness and love. If you live with these things, they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Tm 1:12-17

13 SUN Paul writes: I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength. By calling me into his service he has considered me trustworthy.

Rv 3:20-22

14 Mon The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

1 S 16:1-13

15 Tue The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at appearances but God looks at the heart.

Rm 14:13-19

16 Wed St. Paul writes: The kingdom of God is not a question of exterior rules, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Lk 22:24-27

17 Thu Jesus said to his disciples: Who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet I am among you as one who serves.

2 Co 5:18-21

18 Fri Paul writes: In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

Mk 6:30-34

19 Sat When Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them at length.

Am 5:4,24

20 SUN God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Mt 9:9-13

21 Mon St MATTHEW
As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

Pr 3:3-6

22 Tue Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.

Jr 2:1-13

23 Wed The Lord said of his people: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water, and have dug themselves cracked cisterns that will not hold water.

1 Jn 4:12-21

24 Thu Let us love, since God loved us first. Anyone who does not love the brother or sister they see cannot love God whom they do not see.

Rv 3:7-8

25 Fri Thus says the Lord: Though you are not very strong, you have kept my Word, and now I have opened before you a door that no one can close.

Mt 20:20-28

26 Sat Having called his disciples together, Jesus said: You know that in the world the powerful make their power felt. Among you this is not to happen. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant.

1 Tm 6:11-16

27 SUN Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

Si 2:1-11

28 Mon If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

Rm 12:3-13

29 Tue Paul writes: When you give, give generously, from the heart; when you do works of mercy, do so with joy.

1 Co 13:8-13

30 Wed Paul writes: These three things remain: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of them is love.

JOHANNINE HOURS

REVELATION 1,4-8

Written to kindle and support hope, the Book of Revelation reveals the mystery of God and of Christ. God exists from all eternity: "he is, he was and he is coming." The universe exists in him; he is its "Alpha and Omega," in other words God is the origin of all that exists, and everything finds meaning and fulfilment in him. He is the "Almighty" by his Spirit who is present everywhere: he constantly keeps events on course by "the seven spirits who are before his throne."

From Easter on, the risen Jesus is worshipped together with God. Enlightened inwardly by the Holy Spirit, John sees Christ inseparably united to all God is and does. He is alive in God and present in the tormented history of the nations. If God is the "Almighty," the Risen Christ is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." With its strong political connotations, this expression could cause difficulty. In the context of the Book of Revelation, where political authorities are persecuting Christians, it is an impressive confession of hope. Those who preside over the destinies of the nations, even if they are unaware of the Gospel, are not without a relationship to Christ. That is why, from the earliest times, Christians have prayed for political leaders (cf. 1 Tim 2,2).

But how does Christ intervene in the events of the world? Risen from the dead, he is still "the faithful witness" and "the one who loves us," just as he was during his passion. John is sure that the "pierced" figure of Christ will in the end attract the eyes of every human being (v.7). "All the races of the earth will mourn over him," not so much in sadness as because forgiveness offered by the innocent has the power to penetrate hardened hearts. This remains true until the end of time. All those who suffer unjustly and keep on loving and doing good bring about decisive turning-points in the history of nations.

- When I look at Jesus Christ, what attracts me in him? How can faith in the Risen Christ's presence in the life of nations change the way we look at events?
- What encouragement, what comfort can I find in this passage?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

OCTOBER

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Heb 10:19-25

1 Thu Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and in fullness of faith. Let us hold to the hope we profess, without wavering, for the one who has promised is faithful.

Mt 18:1-4

2 Fri Jesus said: Truly, I tell you, the one who becomes as little as a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jn 4:5-42

3 Sat Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

2 Tm 1:6-18

4 SUN Paul writes to Timothy: I remind you now to fan into a flame the gift God has placed in you. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of inward strength, of love and of self-control.

Mi 6:6-8

5 Mon This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

2 Co 5:1-7

6 Tue Paul writes: We advance by faith, not by sight.

Dt 15:7-11

7 Wed Be open-handed towards your neighbour and towards the poor and needy in your land.

Si 2:1-11

8 Thu You who revere the Lord, trust in him, await his good gifts: everlasting joy and mercy.

1 P 1:22-25

9 Fri Peter writes: Love one another deeply, from the heart.

Mt 28:16-20

10 Sat Jesus, risen from the dead, appeared to his disciples and said: Go, make disciples of all nations. And surely I am with you always, to the end of time.

Lk 17:11-19

11 SUN To the Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

Is 6:1-8

12 Mon In a vision, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whom shall I send?" And he answered, "Here I am, send me."

Mk 4:35-41

13 Tue When Jesus had calmed the storm on the sea, the disciples were overcome with awe and said: Who can this be? Even the wind and sea obey him.

Lk 6:27-35

14 Wed Jesus said: Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

Is 2:2-5

15 Thu Isaiah said: The mountain of the Lord will rise up higher than the hills, and the peoples of the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord so that he may teach us his ways.

Mt 6:7-15

16 Fri Jesus said: Some think that by using many words in their prayer, they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Is 40:1-5

17 Sat Console my people, says your God, console them and speak to their hearts.

2 Tm 3:14—4:2

18 SUN St. Paul writes to Timothy: Proclaim the Word, in season and out of season.

Ph 1:3-11

19 Mon I am confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day of Christ Jesus comes.

2 Co 4:7-12

20 Tue We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

Is 30:15

21 Wed The Lord says: Your salvation is in returning and rest, your strength lies in calm and trust.

Mt 6:25-34

22 Thu Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life... Your Father in heaven knows what you need. Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

Ep 4:1-7

23 Fri With all humility, gentleness and patience, bear with one another in love. Take every care to maintain the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace.

Is 43:1-4a

24 Sat The Lord says: You are precious in my eyes, I value you and I love you.

Si 35:12-14,16-18 (35:14-22)

25 SUN God is utterly impartial. God never shows partiality to the detriment of the poor, but listens to the prayer of the one who is wronged.

Jn 14:18-21

26 Mon Jesus said to his disciples: In a short time the world will no longer see me, but you will see that I live and you will also live.

Is 58:7-10

27 Tue If you do away with the accusing finger and malicious talk, if you give what is yours for the hungry, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkest hour will be like the middle of the day.

1 P 1:3-9

28 Wed Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love him. Still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious it cannot be described.

Jn 6:67-69

29 Thu Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Lk 6:36-38

30 Fri Jesus said: Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged.

Ba 5:1-9

31 Sat Leave behind your sadness and put on for ever the beauty of God's glory. For the Lord will guide you in joy, with the mercy and saving justice that come from him.

JOHANNIN HOUR

PROVERBS 4,18-

There is both a "path of the u right" and a "way of the wicke and we have to choose. T choice of integrity is not a guara tee that we will succeed. But tho who turn neither to right nor to l root their lives in a promise. Th life has a direction; it is like "t light of dawn that grows to the fu ness of day." On the other ro things become more and mo narrow, and people can come t dead end without even realizing

We need to be particularly atte tive to the way we speak and lo at others. "Turn your back on t mouth that misleads," speak t truth and keep your promise Trust can only grow if we can ha confidence in what people sa Lies, half-truths and deceitful wor create a climate of mistrust ar make people suspicious. "Kee your eyes fixed straight ahead." transparent and generous way seeing illuminates what it loo upon. It changes life around u making it more peaceful and bea tiful. But those whose eyes a masked by jealousy and mac shifty by envy trap themselves an others in the darkness and confu sion of their own hearts.

That it why "more than all els keep watch over your heart." He the heart stands for the deepe core of the person, their inner lif where everything comes int being before it emerges in wor or acts. But the heart is above a the place of "the wellsprings of life where the Holy Spirit has hidde unsuspected resources. We c not create the wellspring, but w make sure nothing keeps it fro flowing freely. "A good person says Jesus, "draws what is goo from the store of good in h heart" (Luke 6,45). Keeping watc over our inner life as over precious treasure, we will alway have at our disposition a store c all kinds of good things.

- What helps us to make th choices we need to make eac day?
- What kind of behaviour enable us to foster trust? What attitude are in danger of creating a cl mate of suspicion?
- How can I keep watch over m heart? How can I be attentive t the wellsprings which the Hol Spirit causes to spring up there

Some Echoes from the Youth of Milan

MONTHLY PRAYER

t is with great joy," write Chiara Paola, who live in a suburb south of city of Milan, "that we are beginning repare this year's European meeting. see this meeting as a gift to our city our Church.

Milan is the most important econ- c and financial centre of our country. rything seems geared to the search material prosperity. Profit, work and eers are at the top of the scale of ues. In this context, the local Church resents a lively and dynamic reality, that offers many initatives to instill spel values. A particular role is yed by the parish "oratories" which a long time have been places for eting, religious education and sports vities. Each parish can thus offer a where young people from all back- unds are welcomed, with cultural ac- ties, educational possibilities and ser- e activities.

'In this metropolis, for several years nonthly prayer has been held in one the old churches in the centre. Since ny people from Milan have been to most recent European meetings or Taizé, we think they wil be open to idea of offering hospitality to par- ipants in their homes, and many nilies will agree to open their doors."

REDISCOVERING THE MANY FACES OF OUR CITY

"Many of us," writes Chiara, "have own Taizé for years. And we have en hoping for a long time that a Euro- an meeting would be held in our city! he whole city will be turned upside own and that will be a good thing in is industrial city full of problems and ntradictions, but also of new initia- es and signs of hope. It is a great chal- nge for us to discover or rediscover r city with its many different faces.

"We have already begun speaking a t about the meeting, with our families nd friends, trying also to reach those ho, for different reasons, have become tranged from the Church. It is a good pportunity for them to be involved in e life of the parishes once again, since ere will certainly be enough to do for veryone!"

FORMS OF WEALTH AND POVERTY IN MILAN

Carlo, who helps with a newspaper sold by homeless persons and refugees in the region of Milan, describes what he hopes for from the European meeting:

"Come to us however many you are, and we will welcome you! We have been waiting such a long time for the pilgrimage of trust to stop in our homes, because Milan never shuts down. The exhibition centre in our city is an immense 'factory' of business and work; factories and businesses have sprung up like mushrooms all around the city. People here are wealthier on average than in other parts of Italy. Caught up in the hubbub of production, we think that all is well. That is perhaps why we do not have eyes to see that for many people, things are not so well: in the city there are 3000 homeless persons and, if you arrive by train, you will certainly see some of them welcoming you at the main railway station. If you arrive by bus, look at the traffic lights, and you will see Albanian children who ask for money or Africans who wash your windshield. All these foreigners living in poverty reveal our fear, our inability to welcome them.

"To tell the truth, there are many volunteer associations in Milan. The parishes do a lot of work, and there is energy and enthusiasm in the social and religious field. But often different groups, even in the same parish, know little about what the others are doing. Parochialism keeps us from working together, from trusting one another and from simply knowing each other.

"Come! And you will be a provocation for us: for a few days you will be 'foreigners' without homes, different. We will welcome you, and for us it will be a pilgrimage of trust. You will force us to open our homes! Perhaps that is what Milan needs most: to stop, to sit around a table with young strangers, to be open to a new hope. And it will be wonderful to pray together in the halls of the exhibition centre transformed for once into places of prayer!"

Echoes from the Continents

Milan

Searching for Communion

In early May, there was a meeting of young animators of the archdiocese of Milan in Sesto San Giovanni. Maura helped with the preparation and the animation of the meeting. She tells of her experience:

Sesto San Giovanni is a town of 90,000 inhabitants just outside of Milan. There are many large blocks of flats, and you can see the large abandoned factories of steel-making and metal-working firms, now replaced by office and commercial buildings. That is the aerial view.

For a closer look, our town was the heart of the diocese of Milan for three days, as we welcomed more than 2000 young animators of parish groups. This meeting takes place every two years in a town in the region. The purpose of the meeting is first of all to be together, but each time there is a different emphasis. The important thing is to go forward together on the road of searching and discovering a meaning in life, on the road towards Jesus of Nazareth, by sharing the joy and the fatigue of this searching and of life in the spirit of the Gospel.

This year's theme, "streets of the city, paths of God" was inspired by the life and writings of Madeleine Delbrel, a Frenchwoman who chose to live her faith in the midst of a working-class city. The main purpose of the theme was to help us reflect on a question: how can we realize more clearly that the streets of our daily life, made up of desires, meetings and joys, but also of agitation, worries, sadness and misunderstandings, hide a treasure, that they are paths of God, roads to Emmaus, roads on which Christ walks alongside us?

During the prayer vigil on Saturday evening, our archbishop, Cardinal Martini, meditating on the story of the disciples of Emmaus, told us, "Some phrases in the invitation to this meeting particularly touched me: 'We invite you to discover that the streets of the city are paths of God, to discover that life has a meaning and that each day of the week is a festival.' ...Look for the good that cannot be seen... We need communities that know how to express human warmth and friendship by their lives. We need simple and sincere persons who know how to communicate, by a gesture of friendship or a smile, the joy of Jesus' resurrection in the street, in the bus or metro, at school or at work, in parishes and hospitals. I ask you, be those friends who know above all how to read the

beauty present in their daily activities and show others the richness of day-to-day life."

For those of us who prepared this meeting, everything began in 1997 when the Church asked us to dream together, to think together and to offer hospitality to many young people who would come to us. We quickly realized that in the face of all this work we did not have much strength. So we began by preparing ourselves inwardly, preparing our hearts so that they might truly be hearts that listen, ready to discover God's presence, hidden at our side. In this way we found the strength to set up everything, to prepare the places, the persons, the Christian communities, the parishes.

In preparing this weekend, we got to know our own town before showing it to others. The parishes offered a generous welcome in families, marked by caring and friendship, to hundreds of young people from throughout the archdiocese. This welcome bore witness to an openness to the mystery of the other; it showed other people that their simple presence is already a gift to be welcomed and shared.

Obviously everything was not accomplished easily and quickly. There was also the fatigue we all felt, sometimes in human relationships. But it was good to experience that the search for communion does not always give immediate results, that it calls for continual effort. Seeking communion among all, not just among those who already know and esteem one another, requires time and love. It seemed to us that it was essential for the weekend in Sesto San Giovanni not to be something for just a few people, but for all to feel invited and part of things.

Ukraine

Supporting Those Returning from Deportation

Often there are groups from Ukraine in Taizé. Recently one of these groups spoke about their work helping others:

When Gorbachev took power, a movement working for human rights in the USSR sprang up everywhere. One of its first initiatives was the group "Memorial," founded by the scientist Andrej Sakharov. An identical group began in Ukraine, at Lviv. The main activity of this group is to offer aid to the victims of repression, made up especially of elderly persons. Deported during the Stalin years, these people returned to Ukraine from Siberia or Kazakhstan after years of forced labour in camps, looking for compassion and love. They came to "Memorial" with their problems and all their pain. We tried to listen to them and, as far as possible, to help them. They had a great need to tell someone the story of their life, so full of sufferings since their youth. They wanted to be listened to and understood. It is so important for people to feel that someone is interested in them, that someone loves them and wants to help them.

From 1989 to 1998 "Memorial" published a newspaper called "Cry of Conscience." This paper dealt with the most burning questions of the population. The editors received many letters. People shared their concerns. We did all we could to meet those who wrote the letters and help them to solve their problems.

The young members of "Memorial" began an amateur theatre group called "*Vertep* (The Way)." We used the money we earned from the plays to help those most in need. We put on shows at homes for abandoned children as well as in homes for invalids and children suffering from incurable diseases. During the religious holidays we prepared plays and distributed presents. We also gave out Bibles to the children and tried to explain to them the fundamentals of Christianity.

Cambodia

Living the Easter Mystery Each Day

I just received the Letter from Taizé, *writes Claude, who has been in charge of a self-help project in Sisophon, Cambodia, for the last several years.* It was just in time to remind me of Jesus' Passover, the most beautiful example of love and hope in the Gospel. At Taizé we can live this Gospel hope every week throughout the year. Constantly we are trying to live the Easter mystery each day, trying to recognize Christ who suffers in each of us, with this invitation: "Abandon yourself to Christ and you will see the light." How can I forget that day of Good Friday 1995 when that call touched me? It still remains a mystery to me. And now I am simply trying to live the present moment with those entrusted to me, in the hope that tomorrow will be just as captivating as today.

Abandoning my comfort, my family, my friends, to find myself in the midst of the most neglected--it is this experience that shows me the Christ who identifies himself with the poorest of the poor. When I share my experience with young Europeans, as I did when I visited two years ago, I tell them that it is not necessary to go to the other end of the world in order to have such an experience. In certain areas of rich European cities, young people can help with initiatives of solidarity and sharing. And as soon as there is a great openness of heart and compassion in us, that enables us also to discover the fullness of God.

Now we are celebrating the Khmer new year. For me it is the third new year this year, after January 1 and the Chinese new year! In our centre where artificial limbs are made, the adventure continues, beautiful and passionate. It is wonderful to see young amputees who have lost both legs able to get around again thanks to the artificial limbs that we manufacture. We are trying to work closely with the different international associations and organizations. It was a surprise to discover that a young Spanish man working in a nearby training centre had spent several months in Taizé.

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Prayer for Each Day

These prayers for the different times of the year were prepared by the brothers of the Taizé Community. Each prayer contains a psalm, a choice of Bible reading, intercessions and a choice of closing prayer. A general introduction gives some essential elements and practical suggestions on how to prepare a time of prayer, as well as a section on personal prayer, the prayer around the cross, meditative singing, and icons.

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